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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1691
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4851
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1716
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3733
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 0939
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2225
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000619

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT YUDHOYONO MEETS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS
ACTIVISTS

REF: JAKARTA 207

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY: In a March 26 meeting, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono assured a group of victims of human rights violations that they would find justice. He pledged to hold a special Cabinet meeting to discuss their cases, which included Suharto-era massacres and the 2004 murder of human rights activist Munir Said Thalib. The National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) is pursuing cooperation with Indonesian military officials. Progress continues on the judicial process for the 2007 case in Pasuruan, East Java, in which marines shot and killed four. END SUMMARY.

PRESIDENT'S MEETING

¶2. (U) President Yudhoyono met with families of victims of Suharto-era human rights violations on March 26. In conversations that lasted over an hour, the president pledged to help the victims seek justice. Yudhoyono said he would call a special Cabinet session to address the cases. Usman Hamid, Coordinator of leading human rights NGO KontraS, was present at the meeting and told poloff he felt upbeat about the president's reaction. The cases discussed include:

- a 1984 case of shootings by military in Tanjung Priok, a North Jakarta neighborhood in which some human rights groups claim as many as 400 were killed, allegedly by military troops who opened fire on unarmed protesters;
- a 1989 case in Talangsari, a village in Lampung province of Sumatra in which as many as 246 people were killed by army troops attacking groups who were believed to be attempting to establish an Islamic state;
- the 1998 shootings at Trisakti University and the Semanggi cloverleaf in which a dozen unarmed students were shot dead in an antigovernment rally; and
- the 2004 murder of human rights defender Munir Said Thalib.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION PURSUES COOPERATION

¶3. (C) The National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) expressed optimism about cooperation with the TNI. Commission Chair Ifdhal Kasim told Dep/Pol/C that he was

pleased with the understandings reached during a January 25 meeting with TNI Commander Djoko Santoso (reftel). For example, he said, as a result of the budding cooperation, Santoso agreed to open to the public the military tribunal for the 2007 Pasuruan case in which marines shot and killed four civilians. Indonesian military tribunals are notoriously opaque; Kasim said the agreement to open these was a success. Komnas HAM staffer Sriyana told poloff that Komnas HAM eventually hoped to sign an MOU with the TNI, much like the one with the police (INP). Such an agreement would state that the TNI as an institution would cooperate on investigations involving TNI members and that Komnas HAM would in turn provide materials and training on human rights issues. These issues had been discussed in the January meeting and, although no formal agreement had been reached, Sriyana said, there was room to continue pursuing cooperation with TNI.

14. (C) Although there is room for cooperation, Komnas HAM investigations have not gone entirely smoothly. Three retired generals ignored summons by Komnas HAM in the investigation of the 1989 Talangsari case. (Note: The summonses by Komnas HAM are not legally binding; however, according to Sriyana, Komnas HAM may issue subpoenas through a Jakarta District Court as a last resort.) The generals who did not respond include former Indonesian intelligence chief Hendropriyono, former Vice President Try Sutrisno, and former commander of the Diponegoro Army Command, Wismoyo Arismunandar. The generals had been called as witnesses. One retired general, Laksamana Sudomo, responded to the summons but was accused by some observers of tarnishing the names of his former comrades in arms. Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono recently made public statements urging retired TNI to ignore the non-binding summons for questioning by Komnas HAM, a move which press and human rights activists sharply challenged. Yudhoyono's statement after the meeting with

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victims that he would discuss the matter with Sudarsono seemed to overrule Sudarsono on this issue. Further, Sudarsono agreed to meet with KontraS, Elsam, and other human rights activists to discuss the matter next week.

PROGRESS ON PASURUAN CASE

15. (SBU) The trial of 13 marine suspects in the 2007 shooting of villagers from East Java opened on March 26. The trial, held in a military court, was open to the public. Police and military personnel tightly guarded the eight-hour trial, which was attended by press, marines, and Alastlogo community members. The indictment, read at the trial, stated that the 13 defendants had used ten real bullets in addition to the usual rubber ones. Four villagers died in the incident, which was sparked by a land dispute (see reftel). The defendants were charged with creating unrest and killing the villagers; one was charged under the military criminal code with exceeding his authority.

SOME POSITIVE MOVEMENT

16. (SBU) The President's meeting with victims, a slowly forming sense of cooperation between TNI and Komnas HAM, and the opening of the Pasuruan case all are welcome steps on the way to establishing accountability for past human rights abuses. There have been few such steps in the recent past, and these new developments therefore are particularly significant. Whether they signal a new seriousness by the government remains to be seen.

HUME